

# About the Minnesota Department of Human Rights

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## **Our Mission**

The mission of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) is to make Minnesota discrimination free.

## **What does the Department of Human Rights do?**

We offer services through three programs:

### **Enforcement**

We investigate discrimination claims. We also help to settle cases through mediation. Many cases can be settled when the people involved can sit down and talk about the problem with a neutral person, or “mediator.”

### **Compliance**

We give certificates of compliance to contractors that do business with the state of Minnesota. If you own a business and would like to do work for the state, there could be standards your business has to meet first. To meet these standards, you make and follow an affirmative action plan. When we approve your affirmative action plan, you get an official paper called a certificate of compliance.

### **Education**

We educate people about their rights and responsibilities under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

## **How does the Minnesota Department of Human Rights protect my rights?**

We enforce the Minnesota Human Rights Act. This is a state law that protects everyone in Minnesota from illegal discrimination. Discrimination is when someone treats you differently or does not give you rights you would normally have because of your race, your age, your sex, or some other protected characteristic. You cannot be treated differently because you belong to a certain group or “protected class” of people.

There are 13 protected classes defined in the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

These are:

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Familial Status
- Disability
- Public Assistance
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Local Human Rights Commission Activity

There are some exceptions about how each protected class is covered under the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Unfortunately, unfair treatment happens a lot, but not every unfair act is illegal.

## **The MDHR is a neutral agency**

We investigate charges of illegal discrimination in a neutral way.

### **What does “neutral way” mean?**

- We are not on anyone’s side. We are not trying to “prove your case” for you.
- We will gather facts from everyone, including the people you say have discriminated against you.
- We need more than your story about what happened; we also need the other side of the story. This means we will collect documents and talk to witnesses to get a complete picture of what happened.

## **What to do**

If you think you are a victim of discrimination:

- Write down what happened to you if you think it was unfair.
- Write down the dates when the unfair treatment happened.
- Write down the names of other people that were there.
- Write down what the people who were there said.

## Do not wait!

Sometimes it is hard to say what is discrimination and what is not discrimination—every situation is different. But if you think you are a victim of discrimination, do not wait. Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights immediately. You have one year after the discrimination happened to file a complaint.

## How to Contact Us

### We take phone calls Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Phone: 651-2539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283); Toll free: 1-800-657-3704

### You do not need an appointment to visit our office

We accept walk-ins from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

### Our address

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
Freeman Building  
625 Robert Street North  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

### Email address

info.MDHR@state.mn.us

*If you are emailing the department about filing a charge of discrimination and do not receive a reply within five business days, please contact our intake unit by phone at 651-539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283) or Toll Free at 800-657-3704.*

### Getting an interpreter

If you need an interpreter to help communicate with our office, we will provide one for you free. We have staff members who speak Hmong and Spanish. Call us and say, “I need a (say your language here) interpreter.”